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- Implementing microbulk technology
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Micromegas with ¹⁰B layers

- Due to the so-called ³He shortage crisis, many detection techniques used nowadays for thermal neutrons based on alternative converters.
- Thin films of ¹⁰B or ¹⁰B₄C are used to convert neutrons into ionizing particles which are subsequently detected in gas proportional counters but only for small or medium sensitive area so far.
- The micro-pattern gaseous detector Micromegas has been developed for several years in Saclay and is used in a wide variety of neutron experiments combining high accuracy, high rate capability, excellent timing properties and robustness. We propose here a large high-efficiency Micromegas-based neutron detector with several ¹⁰B₄C thin layers mounted inside the gas volume for thermal neutron detection.
- The principle and the fabrication of a **single detector unit prototype** with overall dimension of ~ 15 x 15 cm² and a flexibility of modifying the number of layers of ${}^{10}B_4C$ neutron converters are described and simulated results are reported,

demonstrating that typically five ${}^{10}B_4$ C layers of 1-2 μ m thickness can lead to a detection efficiency of 20-40% for thermal neutrons and a spatial resolution of submm.

 The design (bulk/microbulk) can be well adapted to large sizes making possible the construction of a mosaic of several such detector units with a large area coverage and a high detection efficiency, showing the good potential of this novel technique.



destructive

Micro Mesh Gaseous Structure, Y. Giomataris, Ph. Rebourgeard, J-P Robert and G. Charpak, NIM A376, 1996, p29 (CEA-biospace patent)

Bulk technology





Design of a high-efficiency Micromegas neutron detector

Aim: to build a large area thermal neutron detector (1m²) based on Micromegas at a reasonable price (<100k€) with a high efficiency of detection (>50% at 25meV), a spatial Neutron beam resolution of the order of 2x2mm, a time resolution for the tagging of the neutron of the order of 1 µs and a max counting rate of the order of 1e⁶ neutron/sec. Design of a single unit Cathode 20µm A with 2-3µm B C tests to be done on a small 1mm Micromegas woven mesh (Ni) with 2 double-sided 2-3µm B C surface (7 x 7 cm²), single sided structure. 1-2cm thickness (stack of 2) Micromegas woven mesh (Ni) 1mm > With with 5 x $^{10}B_{1}C$ layers with 2 double-sided 2-3µm B C With bulk-micromegas technology A single 2-mesh detector unit 1mm Anode Cu PCB + readout Back-to-back Structure Many modules can Symmetric structure in future... theoretically be stacked for >50% efficiency

Electric field configuration – COMSOL simulations



A single 2-mesh detector unit





48%

CF₄: high electron collection efficiency (small diffusion), good performance at high voltages

Thickness optimization of a B₄C layer using FLUKA MC



- In *FLUKA MC* transport and interactions of neutrons with energies below 20 MeV are handled by a dedicated library.
- α and ³H fragments from neutron capture in ⁶Li and ¹⁰B can also be transported explicitly (point-wise transport).

Simplified geometry of a Micromegas prototype

- Al end plates 4 x 4 cm: 0.1 mm
- 2 mesh of Nickel: 4 µm
- 3 Gas layers CF₄: 1 mm
- 5 layers of converter B₄C: 0.1-5 μm
- Neutron beam of (0.025, 0.01, 0.1, 1 eV) pencil-like parallel to z-axis
- Energy Deposition is scored at the gas volumes
- Detection thresholds at: (1, 5, 10, 100 keV).
 Prototype with 5 x ¹⁰B₄C layers

Event-by-Event E deposition spectra: beam on the AI frame with En = 0.025 eV, Eth = 1 keV, $2\mu m B_1C$, 1E6 primaries



Direction cosine of beam with y-axis: 0.95 => 71.8 deg.

<u>A "single 2-mesh detector unit"</u>

2-3 µm of B₂C gives the best efficiency

0.2

0.6

- Can record neutron efficiencies for thermal neutron beam energies (perpendicular beam) ~ 20%
- The aim is to build a detector capable of > 50% efficiency

A "2-double 2-mesh detector unit" (20 B C layers)



Design of the prototype



- Overall dimension: ~ 15 x 15 cm²
- Frame: $7 \times 7 \text{ cm}^2$
- Active zone: 5.4 x 5.4 cm²
- Mess thickness: 4 µm

Meshes for ${}^{10}B_{4}C$ layer production

10% transparency

20% transparency

Several 70x70 mm², 1 mm thick, stainless steel frames, on which are stretched (made by electroforming) 2 types of Nickel mesh:

- 10% optical transparency
- 20% optical transparency
- Meshes received (electroformed Ni meshes available for a very wide range of transparencies)
- Price ~ 330€/mesh
- coated on both sides with ¹⁰B₄C
- done at Linköping Univ.

Tests at CEA – simplified reference geometry Benchmark for simulations



Ne-C₂H₆ (90-10%)

- Anode Voltage: +480V
- Mesh Voltage: +200V
- Drift (B₄C plate) Voltage: at ground
- Seal mode operation > 2months! (No gas circulation...)

Simulation vs Data



NMI3 detector







NMI3 – Set up at CEA/Irfu



NMI3 – Simulation vs Data



NMI3 – feasibility of the multi-layer structure

- The detector concept relies on the feasibility of 10B4C deposition on different types of thin meshes (Nickel, stainless steel, or copper cladded Kapton foils) leading to an efficient neutron conversion and on the transport of the charges through the multi-layered structure onto the micromegas amplification stage.
- A campaign of 10B4C sputtering depositions was done at Linköping, where 5 μm thick, 10 and 20 % optical transparent Nickel meshes are covered on both sides with a 1.5 μm thick 10B4C layer.
- One of these meshes was assembled in the prototype above a bulk-micromegas amplification stage to perform a series of measurements with a ²⁵²Cf neutron source.
- The <u>**next step**</u> was to add a double-coated with ${}^{10}B_4C$, Ni mesh, and having a single-coated aluminium end plate to measure and quantify the contributions on the counting rate from each of the 3 ${}^{10}B_4C$ layers.



• Increasing the applied voltages and doubling the thickness of the top layer



Data measured during 1h with inverted drift voltages to get contribution from the double-coated middle-bottom layer (1 x B_4C layer) (left plot) and from all 3 x B_4C layers without inverting the drift voltages (right plot).

- The principle of the multi-layer structure works!
- Measured total rate agrees, BUT #electrons not...
- The ratio of the fields taking into account the distance of 2 mm between the two drift regions is extremely high ~25 compared to F = 5 that was used in the electric field simulations, proving that the transparency through the nickel mesh is very small.

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Testing different gas mixtures





200 µm

- A more careful study of the nickel mesh (~20% transparency) with a microscope revealed that its thickness is ~ 130 µm compared to ~ 4-5 µm that we have requested from the manufacturing company.
- This was something very unfortunate limiting by far the flexibility/performance of our detector.
- New nickel meshes **5** µm thick are ordered and expected to be delivered very soon.

Simulation / box model (garfield-nebem)



- we are waiting for coating of the 5µm meshes to continue on bulk
- Waiting for that, we performed measurements at with a neutron beam at the Orphée reactor (December 2015)

Set-up at the Orphée reactor



Measurements with a neutron beam at the Orphée reactor



Ready

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Towards **SINE2020**: Implementing the microbulk technology



2 x 4 detectors units

8 gas layers 16 x B₄C layers (2μm)



using FLUKA MC Direction cosine of beam with y-axis: 0.707 => 45 deg.



Multi-Microbulk Detector



- We have done some tests trying to deposit B₄C on Microbulk raw material.
- The deposition on the copper doesn't work, but on the Nickel coated copper it looks great, even after 2 months from the time the deposition was done.
- So, Nickel coated Microbulks seems it is the good way to proceed.



- Easy to make a mosaic
- No transmission problems
- Better spatial resolution
- More electronics
- Evaluation of the cost

Summary & Future plans

- <u>Irfu/LLB</u> → Innovative concept for a cost-effective, highefficiency, large scale neutron detector: a compact stack of multi-stages ¹⁰B covered meshes with a micromegas gaseous amplification.
- <u>Simulations</u>: By placing two double 2-mesh or 3-mesh detector units, the neutron efficiency is 49% and 57% respectively. With a 45° tilt of the full detector with respect to the neutron beam, efficiencies are as high as 57% (2-mesh structure, 20¹⁰B₄C layers) and 64% (3-mesh structure, 28¹⁰B₄C layers).
- A <u>prototype</u> was designed and built: a modular 15x15x2 cm³ gas chamber in which up to 4 meshes can be stacked above a micromegas amplification structure, either a standard bulk-micromegas or a Kapton micro-bulk micromegas.

- The principle of the multi-layer structure works!
- Measured total rate agrees, BUT #electrons not...
- Due to the wrongly big thickness of the Ni meshes (130 µm instead of 5 µm), the electron transmission was limited
- We are waiting for coating of the **5µm** meshes to continue on **bulk**
- Waiting for that, we did start to work on *microbulk*
- <u>**Micro-bulk micromegas</u></u> → Innovative concept for a costeffective, high-efficiency, large scale neutron detector: a mosaic of micro-bulk micromegas coated with {}^{10}B_{4}C.</u>**
- <u>Simulations</u>: By placing eight micro-bulk micromegas detector units, the neutron efficiency is 40% and with a 45° tilt of the full detector with respect to the neutron beam, efficiencies are as high as 45% ($16^{10}B_{4}C$ layers 2 µm thick.).
- A <u>prototype</u> was designed and built: a modular 15x15x2 cm³ chamber in which up to 4 kapton micro-bulk micromegas can be stacked
- <u>Tests to deposit B</u> <u>C</u> on Micro-bulk raw material are on going showing that the Nickel coated Copper Micro-bulk is the good way to proceed
- Start testing the prototype + funding a post-doc...







Micromegas applications



ATLAS @ sLHC: large + reliable detectors

1000 m² of detector: 2 wheels of 125 m² quadruplets









The bulk lab @ SEDI, CEA Saclay



The bulk-micromegas

- First prototypes in 2004. CERN-TS-DEM/Irfu collaboration
 - A woven micro-mesh is embedded between 2 layers of photo-imageable material. Amplification gap of $128~\mu m$ is standard, 104 μm should be ok, 64 μm is tricky
 - No farme, no mechanics → % level dead zones
 - Up to 40x40 cm² is standard
 - Robust, Industrial process







Copper segmented anode **Base Material** FR4 Lamination of Vacrel Photo-imageable polyamide film Positioning of Mesh Stainless steel woven mesh Encapsulation *Tereteresetterestere* Border frame Development Spacer Contact to Mesh Ref: I. Giomataris et al., NIM A560 (2006) 405

stolre Lèon Britouin



FLUKA vs Geant4 at E_{thr} > 10 keV Event-by-Event E deposition spectra: perpendicular beam with En = 0.025 eV, 2µm B₄C, 1E5 primaries – 1 layer B₄C



11% discrepancy

Event-by-Event E deposition spectra: perpendicular beam on the AI frame with En = 0.025 eV, Eth = 1 keV, $2\mu m B_{1}C$, 1E6 primaries





The spectral changes as a function of ¹⁰B thickness are apparent. Energy peak resolution is best for thin ¹⁰B films, whereas efficiency is highest for the thickest ¹⁰B films.

Efficiency in %: perpendicular beam on the AI frame with $5 \times {}^{10}B_4C$ layers



Voltages [V] A "single 3-mesh detector unit" (7 B₄C layers)



Perpendicular beam on the Al frame with En = 0.025 eV, Eth = 1 keV, 2µm B₄C – 7 layers, 1E6 primaries





A "double 3-mesh detector unit" (14 B₄C layers) 2µm B₄C



Direction cosine of beam with y-axis: 0.707 => 45 deg.

A "2-double 2-mesh detector unit" (20 B C layers)















Changing f with const thickness = 7 mu: CF4

0.2

52





Changing thickness with const f=5 – Ne,C2H6(10%)



